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ARTICLES:

(9) Enactment of refueling bill; Next contribution in Afghanistan  
not in sight

A bill amending the New Antiterrorism Special Measures Law to extend the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean cleared the Diet yesterday by an override vote in the House of Representatives. The Aso administration managed to avoid a suspension of the refueling mission, as the previous administration did last year. Given that the security situation in Afghanistan remains serious, however, the international community is calling on Japan to come up with another contribution. But there are few options for assistance that Japanese troops can make in Afghanistan because operations there are fraught with danger. Prime Minister Taro Aso, who is losing political ground, has no power to decide to dispatch troops to mainland Afghanistan, either. Japan's diplomacy has reached an impasse.

The said law contains the same measures as those in the New Antiterrorism Special Measures Law enacted this January. Since the Democratic Party of Japan accepted the government's plan to enact the law in exchange for an early dissolution of the Lower House, its draft amendment cleared the Lower House in late October. But Aso would not pledge to dissolve the Diet, and because it was possible to use "the 60-day rule" allowing the government to use an override vote in the Lower House, momentum for using the new legislation as a bargaining chip over Diet dissolution waned in the ruling and opposition camps.

During that period, Barack Obama, who has pledged to withdraw U.S.

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troops from Iraq and shift priority from Iraq to Afghanistan, was elected in the U.S. presidential election. But Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada only said yesterday: "Japan has not considered other activities (than the refueling operation). The plan to dispatch troops to mainland Afghanistan also has been returned to a clean slate."

Security situation lying as problem

Nearly 1,000 troops from various countries have been killed in Afghanistan. The security situation there remains the biggest obstacle to Japan's dispatch plan. If SDF troops are dispatched to that country, it is highly likely that fighting will cost some lives. Tokyo is also concerned that dispatched troops might have to take action that violates Article 9 of the Constitution that bans them from using weapons overseas. According to a senior government official, the fact-finding team that was dispatched in June by the previous Fukuda administration had been aware of the conclusion that any other operations than the refueling service would be difficult.

Under the politically divided Diet situation, it would not be easy to push through the controversial plan of dispatching Japanese troops to mainland Afghanistan. The Aso administration, busy with preparing emergency economic measures, had no other choice but to devote itself just to having the one bill pass the Diet.

(10) Failure of Bush's North Korea policy: No concession cards

Takeo Miyazaki, Beijing

The six-party head-of-delegation meeting on North Korea's nuclear program, held for the first time in five years, ended on Dec. 11 without reaching an agreement. This means that dialogue with North Korea, which had been led by U.S. chief negotiator Christopher Hill, was unable to produce the result that had been expected. The Bush administration's diplomatic efforts in the end have failed to prevent North Korea from possessing nuclear weapons.

Returning to Washington before watching the end of the meeting, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Hill severely criticized Pyongyang, which remained firmly (opposed to the codification of a verification

protocol), saying: "North Korea is a country that finds it difficult to cooperate with other countries."

The six-party head-of-delegation meeting was aimed to enter the final stage of the North's commitment to abandoning its nuclear programs, once the verification protocol issue was resolved. The meeting reflected President Bush's strong intention to produce diplomatic results while he was still in office. The President held summit meetings that discussed the issue with the leaders of Japan, China and South Korea on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in November in Lima. However, Hill was unable to find common ground in a meeting with his North Korean counterpart held in Singapore prior to the meeting of the chief negotiators of the six-party talks. Hill announced that Washington would not hold any bilateral meeting with Pyongyang on the verification issue, admitting that the negotiating style that until now had moved the six-party talks forward was no longer effective.

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The Bush administration had earlier shifted to a policy of placing emphasis on dialogue with the North, having learned a bitter lesson in its first term. In his State of Union Address Bush in 2002, Bush described North Korea as part of an "axis of evil." He refused to hold direct talks with the North and took a strategy of containing that country, after Pyongyang had admitted to its nuclear weapons program using highly enriched uranium.

The Bush administration, however, changed its position to attaching priority to dialogue when North Korea conducted nuclear testing in October 2006. Hill held direct talks with the North Koreans in January 2007 in Berlin. The six-party talks led by the United States and North Korea became established. Since Hill made many concessions, including one accepting a toothless nuclear declaration, a strict verification protocol was required. Therefore, the six-party talks were certain to face difficulties.

The reason for the failure of the latest round of the six-party talks is that the United States had used up its major concession cards toward North Korea. When Pyongyang backpedaled on its commitment to disable its nuclear facilities because the talks had reached a dead end, Washington decided to delist the North as a state-sponsoring state, the final trump card. North Korea, having obtained a reward, has not made any concession since. It now aims to secure more rewards from the Obama administration.

A high official of the Bush administration played up its achievement in the six-party talks, noting: "We let the North blast the cooling tower of its main nuclear power plant. Plutonium (material for nuclear bombs) will not increase." However, North Korea calls itself a nuclear power and can restore within about one year the nuclear facility that has been undergoing the disabling process.

North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan indicated that Pyongyang has ditched the Bush administration, saying after the last U.S.-DPRK meeting: "The United States now feels that there is not enough time."

(11) Interview with former prime ministerial advisor Yukio Okamoto; Refueling mission helps curbs terrorism and piracy; Japan should consider joining PRT in Afghanistan

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
December 13, 2008

By Keiichi Kaneko

A bill extending Japan's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean has cleared the Diet. I interviewed Yukio Okamoto, a former prime ministerial advisor and foreign affairs commentator, to hear his views on the legislation's possible impact on support for Afghanistan and relations between Japan and the United States.

The refueling mission in the Indian Ocean carries substantial significance. The number of suspicious vessels has decreased markedly owing to maritime patrols by multinational naval vessels

that have been refueled by Japan. Terrorists' navigation has been blocked and piracy at sea has been curbed considerably.

Islamic fundamentalist forces are on the sharp rise in Africa, including Somalia. Without losing power, the forces of the international terrorist group Al Qaeda have linked up extensively.

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If worst comes to worst, part of Africa could become a breeding ground for terrorists. That makes the maritime patrols in waters off Somalia even more vital.

Japan refers itself as a peace fostering nation, but there is frustration in the international community, wondering, "What is it going to do specifically?" The economic cooperation budget has shrunk noticeably. If Japan remains inactive regarding international contribution, the country is certain to meet with criticism and insult harsher than those during the Gulf War of 1991.

With the inauguration of Barack Obama of the Democratic Party as the President, the United States is expected to apply greater pressure on Japan. To build new Japan-U.S. relations, the Obama administration might honestly lend an ear to Japan's explanation for about six months. Japan's international cooperation capability will be tested. Without it, Japan might be pressed for financial contribution. The size of it might be greater than the 13 billion dollars Japan contributed (during the Gulf War).

In support for Afghanistan, there are a variety of means to send personnel without enacting new legislation. Japan should consider joining the military-civilian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). Steps against piracy in waters off Somalia should also be considered as part of antiterrorism measures. In such a case, how to defend non-Japanese commercial ships is quite difficult. I believe if an escort ship steps in between pirates and a commercial vessel, the pirates will flee. If attacked, the right to collective self-defense should be exercised.

It is regrettable that security is regarded only as a bargaining tool to use in the Diet. Japan's security policy has matured with the refueling mission in the Indian Ocean and the mission in Iraq, following the PKO Cooperation Law, the Guidelines (for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation), and the amended SDF Law. We must not allow it to collapse like a house of cards.

Japan riled the United States during the Gulf War. The operation of Japan's unique Export Trade Control Ordinance and the three principles banning weapons exports has been out of tune with the commonsense of the international community. There have been a couple of episodes in which U.S. uniformed officers were outraged to an extent that they might send troops to Japan by halting the operation to topple Saddam Hussein. They are partly responsible for chilly Japan-U.S. relations of the 1990s.

Seeing Japan's passive attitude toward international cooperation, the United States might think, "We are fed up with Japan," like during the Gulf War. I am concerned about future Japan-U.S. relations.

(12) University of Shizuoka Prof. Hajime Izumi: Significance of Japan-U.S. cooperation will increase

YOMIURI (Page 6) (Full)  
December 13, 2008

It is not surprising that the six-party talks wrapped up without reaching an agreement. This is because there is a gap between the U.S. Bush Administration, which wants to produce results before its term ends on Jan. 20, and the five other member countries.

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It is impossible to reach an agreement on the codification of a verification protocol on North Korea's declaration of its nuclear

programs, unless the North agrees to accept a compromise to stipulate in a separate informal document sampling of nuclear materials from nuclear facilities. It is only natural for Pyongyang to choose the incoming Obama administration as a negotiating partner rather than the outgoing Bush administration. Although there is a possibility that the United States will sound out other six-party talks member countries on the holding of a next round, it will probably be difficult to draw out a compromise from North Korea.

In negotiating with North Korea, the incoming Obama administration should press for a comprehensive resolution on such issues as nuclear, missiles, and human rights, while taking over the dialogue policy that the outgoing Bush administration has carried out for the last two years. Since the Obama administration's policy is coincident with Japan's position, Japan-U.S. cooperation in the six-party talks may become more important than at present.

(13) Stray bullet possibly fired by U.S. military hit auto in parking spot of private home 500 meters from base in Okinawa

MAINICHI (Page 10) (Abridged)  
Eve., December 15, 2008

Around 7:30 pm on Dec. 13, the male owner (25) of a car parked outside his home in Igei district of Kin Town in Okinawa Prefecture dialed 110 to report that his lighted number plate on the front of his car had been smashed by a bullet that penetrated the vehicle. An investigation by the Ishikawa police discovered a bullet that was approximately 4.5 centimeter long and approximately 1 centimeter in diameter. Igei district is adjacent to Camp Hansen, where approximately 500 meters to the northeast of the incident is a live-fire range. The police see a high probability that the bullet strayed from the U.S. military, and are investigating the charge of damaging property. The Okinawa Defense Bureau and Kin Town authorities confirmed the damage on the 14th. The possibility is high that a stray bullet passed over a local highway adjacent to Camp Hansen.

(14) Aso announces emergency economic package, with revenue sources left vague

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
December 13, 2008

Prime Minister Taro Aso announced an emergency package to protect people's livelihoods yesterday. This move is aimed at reinstating his policy stance of giving priority to economic growth, which has been overshadowed by his decision to put off submitting a fiscal 2008 second supplementary budget bill to the next ordinary Diet session. Regarding the fiscal resources to finance the package, however, he just said: "The government will show the entire picture by the end of the year." Some observers, focusing on a conflict having arisen in the government and the ruling camp over revenue sources in compiling a fiscal 2009 budget, have expressed concern about the feasibility of the proposed emergency measures.

Aso emphasized in a press conference yesterday: "I am determined to make every possible effort in order for Japan to emerge from the recession as more quickly than any other industrialized countries. In implementing emergency economic measures, though, there is the

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question of where the fiscal resources would come from. Aso categorically said that the government would not float deficit-covering bonds to finance the additional economic package announced on Oct. 30, but he made no reference to revenue sources for other areas. The prime minister aimed to increase the tobacco tax in the fiscal 2009 budget, but the proposal has been derailed due to opposition from some ruling party members. Given this, Aso appears to have judged it unwise to refer to any specific fiscal resource.

The government and the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito have also been at loggerheads over a mid-term program regarding social security and tax and fiscal policy. The ruling coalition has decided not to give any specific

timeframe for hiking the consumption tax, while the government has aimed at specifying the timing. Only one week is left until the Finance Minister presents its draft budgetary bill for fiscal 2009 on Dec. 20. If the Diet falls into deeper disarray over revenue resources to finance the emergency economic package, the Aso administration's political footing might weaken even more.

(15) Gist of Japan-China-ROK summit

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)  
December 14, 2008

(Trilateral relations)

Prime Minister Taro Aso: It is necessary for the three countries to jointly tackle such issues as the global financial crisis and the North Korean issue.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao: Three countries should cooperate in such areas as distribution, industry, and financing.

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak: We would like to cooperate in promoting exchanges among young people and the like.

(Economic and monetary situations)

Three leaders: Now that the financial crisis is growing serious, cooperation among the three countries is essential and necessary. We welcome an agreement reached to expand currency swaps. It is important to strengthen the roles of the Chiang Mai Initiative and Asia Development Bank.

(North Korean issue)

Each leader: It is regrettable that no agreement was reached on a nuclear verification protocol in the latest six-party talks. We will continue to join hands in the six-party talks.

Aso: I would like to ask for your understanding and support of our effort to improve relations with North Korea, including a settlement of the abduction issue.

Wen and Lee: We will understand and support Japan's effort.

(UN reform)

Aso: Reforming the UN Security Council is necessary. I hope Japan will hold a constructive dialogue with China and South Korea.

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Wen: I will attend negotiations on UN reform in a responsible manner.

Lee: I agree on a reform plan that will serve to benefit Asian and all other countries.

(Climate change)

Aso: In a session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in late 2009, it is necessary to form a mechanism that involves all major greenhouse gas emitters.

Lee: Japan, China, and South Korea in cooperation should submit the same opinion.

(Disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation)

Aso: I would like to seek your cooperation in spreading the nuclear non-proliferation effort and the treaty banning cluster bombs.

Wen: I have given heed to Japan's position.

Lee: I agree to and support Japan's position.

ASTERISK Japan-China summit

(Japan-China relations)

Aso: I am determined to pour my energy into promoting exchanges between young peoples and in the security area.

Wen: I highly evaluate the leaders' frequent visits to each other's countries. I appreciate Japan's assistance on the occasion of the Great Sichuan Earthquake and the Beijing Olympics.

(Senkaku Islands)

Aso: Operations by Chinese oceanographic research vessels are regrettable. They will not have a favorable impact on Japan-China relations.

Wen: This district is China's inherent territory from ancient times. This position is consistently clear and firm. We would like to properly resolve the issue through talks. I hope the issue will not negatively affect our favorable bilateral relationship.

Aso: The Senkaku Islands are Japan's inherent territory, and there is no doubt about it historically and in view of international law. I ask you to take proper preventive measures.

(Development of the East China Sea)

Aso: I hope the two countries will hold talks at an early date to translate our political agreement into action.

Wen: I expect working-level talks to be continued.

(Food safety)

Aso: I would like your country to pin down the causes of a series of  
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incidents, including Chinese-made frozen dumplings found contaminated with pesticides.

Wen: I want to continue to communicate and cooperate with Japan.

(North Korean issue)

Aso: I expect the role to be played by China.

ASTERISK Japan-ROK summit

(Japan-ROK relations)

The two leaders: We make efforts to establish a mature partnership.

Lee: We would like to change our bilateral ties from the remote relations between close countries to a close relationship between close countries.

(Economy)

Aso: It is necessary to quickly resume talks on concluding an economic partnership agreement.

Lee: In working-level talks, it will be possible to find ways that will benefit both sides.

(North Korean issue)

The two leaders: Strengthening cooperation with the U.S. Obama administration is imperative.

(16) Former ASDF Chief of Staff Toshio Tamogami speaks his mind; U.S. forces must withdraw from Japan, Japan must discuss nuclear option (Part 2)

SHUKAN GENDAI (Excerpts)  
December 20, 2008

Regarding the question of reducing U.S. bases, Japan has not been able to say anything to the United States which has vested interests in remaining. Japan has been paying the U.S. military the so-called sympathy budget worth over 200 billion yen annually. It would be nice to earmark that much money for the SDF, but the government cannot mention that, either. Once a final decision is made on the relocation of U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam, Japan would be forced to foot a large portion of the bill for it. The incoming Obama administration, scheduled to be inaugurated in January, seems enthusiastic about the Afghanistan issue, so there is a possibility that Japan will be forced to send SDF troops to Afghanistan, which is far more dangerous than Iraq.

There is only one way that can prevent the United States from acting arbitrarily in talks with Japan. That is for Japan to actively disclose what was discussed with the United States. That would prompt the public to raise objections, saying, "That's absurd." Public protests would not allow the government to be at America's beck and call.

Japan must discuss its nuclear option as early as possible

Going nuclear would be the most effective way for Japan to become an  
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independent country. In international politics, non-nuclear weapon states have to be subservient to the wishes of nuclear powers in the end. Opting to arming itself with nuclear weapons is the fastest way for a country to break away from a position of subordination.

Let's say there are two countries at odds with their military strength 10 to 1. The country with 10 wins in a conventional war. If the country with military strength 1 possesses nuclear weapons, there would be no winner. That is because with a threat to use nuclear weapons by the country with 1, the country with 10 would not be able to launch an attack for fear of a counterattack. In that sense, nuclear weapons are arms that would never be used. Nuclear weapons are so powerful that (a country) can demonstrate their effectiveness by just declaring it will go nuclear.

Fully aware of such a principle of nuclear weapons, the nuclear powers have created the NPT (Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty) regime so as to prevent further increases in the number of nuclear powers. Even so, India and Pakistan have become nuclear powers in Asia.

North Korea, too, conducted a nuclear test the year before last. The six-party talks to put an end to the North's nuclear development have been underway for over five years, but no substantial results have been achieved. The North has no intention of abandoning its nuclear ambitions, so it is no surprise that the talks have not moved forward.

Once the North possesses a nuclear weapon capable of reaching the United States, the situation in Northeast Asia would change drastically. As I just mentioned earlier, the United States would not be able to attack the North and its guarantee to defend Japan from the North would disappear. If Japan wants to maintain its deterrence, the country must arm itself with nuclear weapons.

But the subject of nuclear arming is taboo in Japan, and people are discouraged from even discussing the option.

But being a party to the NPT, it is difficult in reality for Japan to go nuclear right away. So the second-best option is to have America allow us to use its nuclear weapons in time of a contingency.

I'm talking here about an introduction of the nuclear-sharing arrangements that exist already among Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Turkey, all members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Routinely conducting training using America's nuclear weapons (nuclear-powered submarines, etc.), the five countries are allowed to have the wartime use of some of American-owned nuclear weapons. Tokyo should ask Washington to let



Japan have the same arrangement. The system could bring about the same effect as possessing nuclear weapons without Japan having to build its own nuclear arsenal.

Japan must consider having an independent deterrence capability, while considering a variety of means, including such a system. I will reiterate that we cannot ensure the security of Japan by leaving everything to the United States.

As a first step, it is important to begin discussions without taboos. I have been treated as a dangerous individual by some lawmakers and the news organizations. I would be satisfied if I can

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create a stir by stimulating extensive national debate on defense.

SCHIEFFER